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SUBJECT: THIRTY YEARS OF SURINAMESE CHINESE DIPLOMATIC  
RELATIONS

REF: Paramaribo 305

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR MARSHA E. BARNES, REASONS 1.4 b & d

11. (C/NF) The Chinese government continues its high profile activities in Suriname and the Surinamese government, if not the general public, is responding warmly. Chinese Ambassador to Suriname Chen Jinghua hosted a reception May 26 to mark thirty years of diplomatic relations between the PRC and Suriname. The GOS turned out in force, underscoring the importance it attaches to the relationship. The President, four of his Ministers and the Speaker of the National Assembly attended. The President is visibly absent from events hosted by the US, France, the Netherlands and the EU.

12. (C/NF) While national anthems played, guests could contemplate the tableau of 70 year President Venetiaan, clad in his habitual Mao suit, standing next to Ambassador Chen Jinghua, turned out in a business suit with snappy tie. The attire seemed to speak to the pace of change in each country in the last thirty years. Each extolled the virtues of the relationship, with the Ambassador mentioning Suriname's adherence to a one China policy and the assistance provided by doctors temporarily assigned to the military hospital.

13. (C/NF) The relationship has produced, however, few results in terms of trade and investment. Chinese exports totaled only US \$31.3 million in 2004 and Suriname exported only \$US 1.06 million to China last year. Asked at the reception if the Controversial Patamacca palm oil deal was on track (reftel) the President told the Ambassador the combination had campaigned against it and he had told them they now needed to get their followers on board leaving no doubt that he expects it to proceed.

14. (C/NF) China has however provided the Surinamese a series of highly visible projects. The Chinese built the national sports hall, completed several years ago, was the only place large enough to accommodate the People's United Assembly when it gathered to elect a President last August. The Chinese built Foreign Ministry is scheduled to open June 15, although we understand with only limited fanfare in deference to victims of flooding in the country's interior. A Chinese company has a large government contract for road paving. The laborers who come to build

stay on joining the ranks of recently arrived Chinese.  
(Note: Embassy attempts to obtain information on the numbers of Chinese immigrants arriving over the last five years have always been rebuffed. End note)

15. (C/NF) The President and his NPS political party have been big supports of increased Chinese immigration. Many members of its Hindustani based VHP coalition partner view this support for the Chinese as an attempt to undermine the Hindustanis' traditional commercial dominance. While grousing about the recent Chinese influx was mostly done in private, of late the questioning of the number of Chinese arrivals as has become more public. The gruesome murder of two young Chinese boys last years unleashed a spate of complaints picked up by the local papers about the "new " Chinese bringing criminality to Paramaribo. There is criticism of the new arrivals failure to assimilate and learn Dutch. In the murder case those whom the police sought to question apparently spoke only a Chinese dialect, handicapping their investigation. A recent article noted that at a traffic control point, of fifteen persons who were stopped for not having a driver's license, thirteen were Chinese.

16. (C/NF) Bio note: 55 year old Ambassador Chen Jinghau expects to leave Suriname this year. He will return to Beijing, but he said because he is nearing retirement he expects to be posted abroad again shortly. He has occasionally shared his frustration with pace of GOS policy formulation and told Ambassador he hopes to go someplace where there is more going on. Jinghau who previously served in Washington and as Ambassador to Fiji, thought he might be reassigned in the region, possibly to Jamaica.

BARNES